

give to Egypt on its human rights record, hoping that if we tied a portion of the \$1.3 billion to things like holding free and fair elections, or releasing political prisoners, allowing the media space to operate, that the Egyptian Government would make progress.

But nearly every single year, the State Department waives those conditions and just gives Egypt the money, even when the conditions aren't close to being met. Only once—and I will give them credit for this—in 2017, Secretary Tillerson cut \$95 million and temporarily held up another \$195 million of Egypt's aid money, but even that \$195 million was released before all the conditions were met.

Never has the State Department just said the obvious: The conditions weren't met. We are not going to waive them. You are not getting the money.

And we are talking about a portion of the money, this year, \$300 million of the \$1.3 billion.

It is painfully clear that the lesson Egypt has learned over the years is a simple one: America is not serious about human rights, and so we don't need to invest in improvements; we are going to get the money anyway.

This year, Congress has said that the Secretary of State should withhold \$300 million of military aid to Egypt if Sisi doesn't substantially reverse his campaign of political repression and intimidation. What we know, unequivocally, is that no meaningful progress has been made. The latest arrests of Mohamed Soltan's family were done in February of this year. That was kind of like a thumb in the eye of the new administration and the new Congress.

Like clockwork every year, right before the annual waiver is given by the State Department, Egypt normally does release a few of the most egregiously detained prisoners or announces some minor change in policy, but it is always window dressing. The trend from year to year is always the same: more human rights violations, more intimidation, less free speech, less democracy.

This year, the United States must withhold the \$300 million, in accordance with the law passed by this Congress. It will send a message to Egypt that we are serious about reform and, maybe more importantly, it will send a message to the world that we are willing to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

Now, this town freaks out whenever the security assistance gravy train goes off the rails, even for a moment. Keeping the pipeline of American arms flowing to brutal regimes, it makes a lot of people rich in Washington. And those people are whispering in the ears of Congress and the administration right now, making the claim, as they do every single year, that the sky is going to fall if Egypt doesn't get its \$1.3 billion—all of it, all of the \$1.3 billion—as they have every year since 1987. They will say that all the lines of cooperation that I mentioned earlier will disappear.

But in reality, the return on investment for our military aid to Egypt, it has been diminishing for a long time now. And there is no reason that the things that we get from Egypt—Suez access, overflight rights, continued upholding of the peace treaty with Israel—will be overturned should they get only \$1 billion rather than \$1.3 billion this year.

Why is that?

Well, because in 1987, those benefits Egypt provides were arguably concessions to our requests. But, today, Egypt does those things not because we pay them to do it, but because they have their own reasons to do them.

For years, the United States looked the other way while another regional power, Saudi Arabia, carried out its own dizzying campaign of repression against its own people. We did virtually nothing. We said virtually nothing. Instead, we rewarded Saudi Arabia with record amounts of armed sales. And then one day, they kidnapped a U.S. resident and they chopped him to pieces. And America was made a fool in the eyes of the world, and, in some ways, we have had a hard time recovering from that day.

Mohamed Soltan, just like Jamal Khashoggi, believes that there is no other nation in the world that cares more about standing up for democracy and civil rights than America. Egypt doesn't care. They harass and imprison his relatives at will—the relatives of a high-profile American citizen—because they can. Let's not make the same mistake with Egypt that we made with Saudi Arabia.

Egypt notices when we talk tough and do nothing, so does the rest of the world. And so withholding \$300 million of their \$1.3 billion until Egypt makes real concessions on reform, it won't fundamentally harm U.S. interests in the Middle East. It will only make us more safe.

It is the best opportunity for the Biden administration to show that we mean it when we say that the stakes in the fight between autocracy and democracy are sky high and that we are willing to do more than just talk about our values. America has the capacity to live them as well.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it was 1 week ago that the Senate held a procedural vote on a bill that hadn't even been written. And to no one's surprise, it failed.

Republicans, for our part, said it made no sense to advance to a more than \$1 trillion infrastructure plan before knowing what was in the plan and how it would be paid for.

Our Democratic colleagues argued that the big text was imminent, coming any moment, any second, and it was critical to get the process started.

Well, here we are, 1 week later. I guess the bill text wasn't imminent because we still haven't seen it yet.

Earlier today, we heard that there was an agreement, I assume in principle, on the major portions of the proposed plan, which I concede is a major sign of progress. I want to commend all of our colleagues, including Senators PORTMAN, COLLINS, ROMNEY, and CASIDY, who have been working hard on our side of the aisle to achieve consensus, and on the Democratic side, Senators like Senator MANCHIN and SINEMA and others.

But this infrastructure plan that we haven't seen yet is no more ready for action today on the floor than it was last week. We made clear last week that we wanted to see the details before voting on a trillion-dollar bill that will impact every community across this country.

Until this bill is actually written and we have a chance to review it, including all the details, the costs, the pay-fors, and the impact it will have on our States, I will not support it. And I imagine the majority of my Republican colleagues feel the same way.

Now, I say that also believing that it is important for us to get a bipartisan infrastructure bill. I actually want us to. But part of the challenge is these groups of gangs that operate outside of what we would call regular order here; that is, the committees of jurisdiction, where all Senators get to participate in the final product, including on the floor of the Senate, that is really not possible when you have a group—a small group, a subset of the Senate negotiating a deal among themselves, and then they present it to us as a fait accompli and say: You have to accept it.

Well, it doesn't work very well, ordinarily, but I am willing to give them a chance because I know they have committed a lot of time and effort into this. But it is going to depend on a couple of things. My vote, ultimately, is going to depend on a couple of things.

First of all, we fund our highways, our roads, and bridges mainly through the gas tax. That is the amount of money that goes into the gallon of gas that is dedicated for the highway trust fund. Well, because our cars are getting more mileage now and because we are seeing alternatives, like electric vehicles, the highway trust fund is simply inadequate to fund the demand of our infrastructure: roads and bridges and the like.

But that is no excuse for us to get away from what has heretofore been a pay-for model or a user-fee model. In other words, infrastructure should be paid for by the people who use it, not people who don't use it. And that is why the gas tax, at least as originally conceived, made a lot of sense.

But we made a couple of mistakes. One, we didn't index it to inflation. And, secondly, we just couldn't account, back when the gas tax was adopted, for the innovation we have seen in transportation—natural gas-driven vehicles, electric vehicles, and the like—that pay nothing for our roads and infrastructure.

And I think it is a very serious problem for us from a fiscal point of view to get away from the user-fee model. First of all, we know that we have had to spend a lot of money to fight the COVID-19 virus, to deal with the public health and the economic consequences associated with it.

That is why we passed, I believe it was, a total of five bills last year alone on a bipartisan basis to defeat this virus. And you could tell from some of the face masks being worn here in the Chamber right now, we have not yet been able to defeat it finally, notwithstanding the discovery and broad use of vaccines and other treatments.

But an infrastructure bill is different than a pandemic because we actually should be in the position of paying for our spending rather than borrowing from future generations.

I appreciate the good work that has been done by the bipartisan negotiating group to try to come up with some credible pay-fors, but they haven't been able to use the traditional user-fee model because President Biden and his administration took it off the bargaining table, which means you have to use other pay-fors outside of a user-fee model in order to pay for it or else you just merely add to our debt and pass on the responsibility to pay those bills back to future generations.

Well, I don't think any of this is news to the majority leader, who, once again, has scheduled a vote before we have a bill that we can actually read, discuss with our constituents.

I, for example, would like to be able to discuss the contents of the bill with my friends at the Texas Department of Transportation and the Governor and other people who are very much engaged in what the infrastructure in my State looks like, what it should be, and what we need in terms of investments in the future. But I can't do that if the bill text hasn't even been released yet, and the majority leader knows that.

So the question I have is: Why in the world would the majority leader schedule another vote before the bill is even released, before we can read it and consult with our staff and outside experts, like my friends at the Texas Department of Transportation?

We have seen contradictory signs about what our Democratic colleagues really hope to do. When asked about the fate of the bipartisan infrastructure plan, the Democratic majority whip said talks have gone on long enough, and he would support rolling it into the Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending bill that NANCY PELOSI said she would not pass in the House a bipartisan infrastructure bill unless, at the same time, she was able to pass what has nominally been called a \$3.5 trillion spending bill, but we know it is actually spending a whole lot more money than that.

President Biden spilled the beans when this bipartisan group was at the White House a few weeks ago, where he said he would not sign the bipartisan

bill into law unless, at the same time, he could sign the partisan, reckless tax-and-spending bill that is passed purely on a partisan basis. In other words, they are linked both by Speaker PELOSI and by President Biden.

Now, President Biden did walk that back, or at least he tried to, but Speaker PELOSI has remained adamant that she will not pass any bipartisan infrastructure bill in the House unless she can get the votes in the House and, presumably, in the Senate in order to put pressure on some of the Democrats who are resistant to seeing us continue to add to our national debt and fuel inflation by more reckless spending, as well as the huge tax increases that would necessarily go along with it.

So I am beginning to wonder if there was actually a sincere desire on the part of our Democratic leaders here in the Senate whether they actually wanted to pass a bipartisan bill or whether their goal was really to pass the reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill that Speaker PELOSI said had to pass if we were going to pass a bipartisan bill.

We also need to know whether Senator SCHUMER will honor requests for people who were not part of the negotiating group, the gang—I guess they call themselves G-10 or G-20 or G-21—whatever they are called. But it is a subset of Senators who have been negotiating the bill. The question is whether the majority will permit other Senators who are not part of that negotiating group to offer amendments to the bill and whether they will permit us to have debate and votes on those amendments because I didn't delegate the responsibilities I have as a Senator, representing 29 million Americans, to them to negotiate a bill for my State. That is my responsibility, and I insist on having a chance to read the bill, to consult with them, and to see what the impact is going to be on my State and to consult with my Governor and the head of the Texas Department of Transportation and others to see whether this is something they believe that earns my support and that Texas should support.

None of this is mysterious. This is the normal way of doing business around here. Moving bills through committee, Democrats and Republicans get a chance to shape those bills in committee, and then the majority leader brings it to the floor, and then everybody else gets to participate in the process.

I hope in his rush to get this bill out the door, that the majority leader will allow a reasonable amendment process. This isn't like the early days of the pandemic, when we were experiencing a global emergency. We need to deal with our infrastructure needs, but this isn't emergency spending. This is part of the daily or annual bread and butter of what the legislative process should be about, and that is another reason why we shouldn't pass a bill without responsible pay-fors.

Well, we have seen this kind of political maneuvering before. In fact, Senator SCHUMER's designed-to-fail agenda practically dominated the work of this Chamber last month. He scheduled votes on some of the most controversial bills out there in order to orchestrate Republican opposition: legislation that exploits the cause of pay fairness to line the pockets of trial lawyers, a bill to seize States' power to regulate their own elections, as provided for in the Constitution, and to cement the Democratic majorities in the Congress for the foreseeable future.

And now the majority leader is threatening to tank an infrastructure bill so he can go on to another partisan tax-and-spending-spree bill, which makes me think that is really what they care the most about. Rather than give the negotiators time to succeed and the rest of us time to understand what is in the bill and to consult appropriately with our constituents, Senator SCHUMER turned what should be a unifying process to build consensus into a divisive one, all in order to tee up his desire to see us pass a multitrillion-dollar tax-and-spending bill. That is on top of all the spending that we have done on a bipartisan basis for COVID-19, at least until the first part of this year, when our Democratic colleagues insisted on pushing through another \$1.9 trillion of unpaid-for spending, all in the name of COVID-19, when we all know that only about 10 percent of it was addressed at the pandemic, which causes all of us to recall Rahm Emanuel's famous statement that "an emergency is a terrible thing to waste." And in the name of COVID-19 relief, another \$1.9 trillion was added to our children and grandchildren's debt burden.

Well, for the reckless tax-and-spending bill that Speaker PELOSI so desperately wants, the pricetag has been put on that legislation at another \$3.5 trillion, and I don't think most of us can really get our head around what a trillion is. It is more than a billion, we know. It is a whole lot more than a million. But this kind of reckless spending is really unprecedented, except in a national emergency, like COVID-19 relief.

Some budget experts have estimated that the reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill that Speaker PELOSI so desperately wants could actually cost \$5.5 trillion, and if our Democratic colleagues insist on rolling the bipartisan infrastructure bill into that plan, it will cost taxpayers even more.

Well, as a reminder, our Democratic colleagues spent more than \$2 trillion earlier this year alone, as I mentioned, and the result of this reckless spending spree speaks for itself.

Democrats have sent big incentives to workers to remain at home, not back at work, through September of this year by enhancing their unemployment benefits with an additional Federal Government bonus, which provided that in my State about 80 percent of

the people collecting unemployment insurance were making more on unemployment insurance than they were going back to work. So it is no wonder that we had trouble getting people back to work, and businesses had to cut back on their open hours. Restaurants had to close down because they simply couldn't find the workers, or the businesses couldn't compete with the Federal Government for these essential workers.

We are a long way from reaching prepandemic unemployment rates. And, surprisingly, job openings are at record highs.

But here is one of the biggest concerns that is borne out by polling that people are beginning to have, and that is inflation. We are seeing inflation at a 13-year high. Consumers are feeling the sting of rising prices for virtually everything they buy. That is what happens when too much money chases too few goods and services. Prices go up. And we are seeing the cause of that inflation, its impact on gasoline, on groceries, and on appliances. Folks are shelling out more money for these products today than they have been as recently as a year ago.

And if you have gone to the used car lot recently, you are bound for some serious sticker shock. And you can't even get a new car because of the semiconductor shortage caused by the pandemic. But over the last year alone, used car prices have gone up an eye-popping 45 percent.

As I said, there is another reason why new cars aren't available, and that is because the semiconductors that make these computers on wheels actually run have not been available because 90 percent of them are made overseas, in Asia.

Now, we have taken an important step to try to deal with this vulnerable supply chain of semiconductors, which affects both our economy and our national security, when we passed the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act last month here in the Senate. So we are capable of doing things on a bipartisan basis if given the opportunity.

The Wall Street Journal recently called this bill, the Innovation and Competition Act, the "third infrastructure initiative" and noted that while smaller, it is "freighted with just as much long-term economic and strategic importance."

So as Congress debates infrastructure investments, we can't let the one that passed the Senate last month slip through the cracks. There is a lot on the line for our economy and national security, and we need the CHIPS program up and running, which is a \$52 billion investment in domestic manufacturing of advanced semiconductors—something that we rely on Asia for, and principally Taiwan, which produces 63 percent of advanced semiconductors. And we can only imagine if that supply chain from Taiwan or Asia was disrupted by another pandemic, a natural disaster, or, Heaven forbid, a military conflict.

I want to make sure that our colleagues know that I appreciate the work they have put into this bill, but I know they also appreciate the individual responsibility that we have as Senators to participate in the process, particularly when it comes to spending \$1 trillion on infrastructure.

We need to have the text of the bill, not just a summary. I appreciate our colleagues giving some of us a notebook. It is a bipartisan infrastructure investment and jobs act summary. That is helpful, but that is not legislative text. And then we need an open amendment process so that those of us who weren't party to the bipartisan negotiations can participate in the process. Hopefully, it will make the bill better. I would like to see us actually substitute some of the spending pay-fors with a user-fee model that has been traditional, using the gas tax. As I said earlier, the gas tax has become a little outmoded and insufficient to pay for the infrastructure that we all want and need.

There is a real need to invest in America's infrastructure, and it has never been more important for us to actually pay for those investments in a responsible way.

As it stands today, our debt-to-GDP ratio—gross domestic product—is at the highest level since World War II. This is not the time to continue spending and spending and spending until our grandkids are left sitting in a pit of debt so deep they will never climb out of it.

I am encouraged that our colleagues have gotten us this far, but the bill is not ready, and we need to see the text and be given adequate time to read it and consult with our constituents about it and to satisfy ourselves that the summaries they provided us and the pay-fors are real.

Senator SCHUMER would be wise to postpone today's vote until Members on both sides have had a chance to evaluate the details of this legislation.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at certain times during my remarks I be allowed to address the Senate in Spanish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CUBA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to urge leaders across the United States and governments around the world to stand in solidarity with the people of Cuba as they cry out for freedom—for "libertad"—and for an end to decades of dictatorship.

What is happening in Cuba today is nothing short of historic. Yes, we have seen protests take place in years past, but the demonstrations that began on July 11 stand apart.

What began as one small pro-democracy protest in San Antonio de los Baños spread across the island in a matter of hours. Cubans from all walks of life

took to the streets in a courageous call for democratic change. Among those clamoring for freedom were Afro-Cubans demanding an end to discrimination and injustice, young people dreaming of a brighter future in their country, artists and activists from the San Isidro Movement singing "Patria y Vida" and ordinary citizens facing widespread food shortages, poor access to healthcare, and little to no protection from the ravages of COVID-19.

The people of Cuba are crying out for freedom, and we must hear them.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

The Cuban people are asking for what is fair, which is freedom, and we must listen to their cry.

This is not about politics or ideology. The free world has a responsibility to stand with those who are not yet free, and the people of Cuba are anything but free.

Let's dispel the myths about what life is under the Cuban regime. For decades, the regime's ruthless and repressive tactics have systemically silenced the Cuban people while party insiders and cronies enrich themselves at their expense.

Today, Cuba remains a one-party communist state, where the basic principles of political pluralism and representative democracy are outlawed—outlawed. There are no free and fair elections in Cuba. Miguel Diaz-Canel may have appeared on a ballot, but there were no other candidates. He was not chosen by the people but hand-picked by the Castros as their successor. He has the same ideology. He says the same things. He talks about "la continuation," the continuation—continuation of oppression.

There is no freedom of the press in Cuba. Independent journalists are routinely targeted with violence, harassment, imprisonment, and raids on their homes and offices.

There is no internet freedom in Cuba. The regime monitors online traffic, blocks sites, and charges so much money for data that most Cubans cannot afford access. And when the regime gets scared about what the Cuban people are saying and doing, they shut down the whole internet. Yes, they shut down the whole internet. The only reason a government shuts down the internet is because they fear their own people.

But this has consequences. I recently had a Catholic priest visiting here in Washington from Cuba. He told me an incredibly powerful story. He said this young man came to see him in church and said: I would fight. I would give my life for the cause of freedom if only someone would know that I died.

If only someone would know that I died.

There is no freedom of expression in Cuba. Hundreds of activists, artists, and political dissidents are taken prisoner every year without due process. Others are beaten in the streets or terminated from their jobs for daring to